



PANHANDLE

BENEWAH, BONNER, BOUNDARY, KOOTENAI, & SHOSHONE COUNTIES

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

The Panhandle's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell from 8.6 percent in January to 7.9 percent in February. Exceptionally warm, dry weather kept more people working in *Construction, Logging, and Transportation* than normal in February. Some of the unemployment decrease resulted from Panhandle residents dropping out of the labor force, at least temporarily. When individuals quit actively looking for jobs, they no longer are counted as unemployed, so they are not included in the labor force numbers. Two years of poor job prospects have caused some Panhandle residents to give up looking for work or to move elsewhere, thereby reducing the unemployment rate.

For the first time since August 2001, *Goods-Producing Industries* showed year-over-year job gains, adding 270 jobs. Although *Manufacturing* remains 400 jobs below its peak of 7,189 jobs in August 2001, it added a net 130 jobs between February 2002 and February 2003. It gained 70 jobs at Sandpoint-based Litehouse in *Food Manufacturing*, 60 jobs at Sandpoint-based Unicep Packaging and other plastic product manufacturers, and 110 jobs in *Wood Products*, while it lost jobs in electronics, furniture, and metal products. (In the former SIC system, *Manufacturing* included logging and newspaper, book, and magazine publishing. Now, logging is the largest part of *Natural Resources & Mining* and publishing is the largest part of *Information*.) Low mortgage rates fueling residential construction and good weather boosted *Construction* employment from 3,600 jobs last February to 3,790 this February. *Natural Resources & Mining* was the only *Goods-Producing* sector to show a net job loss, losing 40 logging jobs and 10 mining jobs.

Trade, Transportation, & Utilities showed virtually no change between February 2002 and February 2003, as job losses in *Transportation* nearly offset marginal job gains in *Wholesale Trade* and *Retail Trade*. Throughout the 1990s, *Retail Trade* grew rapidly, adding an average of 460 jobs per year. The economic slowdown since 2001 and the downsizing of Sandpoint-based cata-

Panhandle Table 1: Labor Force & Employment

	Feb 2003*	Jan 2003	Feb 2002	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	92,130	92,280	91,070	-0.2	1.2
Unemployed	7,320	7,940	7,630	-7.8	-4.1
% of Labor Force Unemployed	7.9	8.6	8.4		
Total Employment	84,810	84,340	83,440	0.6	1.6
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	90,910	91,530	89,890	-0.7	1.1
Unemployed	9,820	10,050	10,220	-2.3	-3.9
% of Labor Force Unemployed	10.8	11.0	11.4		
Total Employment	81,090	81,480	79,670	-0.5	1.8
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS					
Goods-Producing Industries					
Natural Resources & Mining	1,510	1,510	1,560	0.0	-3.2
Construction	3,790	3,890	3,600	-2.6	5.3
Manufacturing	6,790	6,860	6,660	-1.0	2.0
Wood Product Manufacturing	2,840	2,860	2,730	-0.7	4.0
Other Manufacturing	3,950	4,000	3,930	-1.3	0.5
Service-Producing Industries					
Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	12,940	13,020	12,930	-0.6	0.1
Wholesale Trade	1,290	1,290	1,280	0.0	0.8
Retail Trade	10,000	10,050	9,960	-0.5	0.4
Utilities	360	360	360	0.0	0.0
Transportation & Warehousing	1,290	1,320	1,330	-2.3	-3.0
Information	1,260	1,240	1,270	1.6	-0.8
Financial Activities	2,840	2,850	2,710	-0.4	4.8
Professional & Business Services	6,160	6,180	5,950	-0.3	3.5
Educational & Health Services	6,770	6,720	6,410	0.7	5.6
Leisure & Hospitality	7,160	7,220	7,150	-0.8	0.1
Other Services	2,170	2,150	2,160	0.9	0.5
Government Education	5,210	5,060	5,180	3.0	0.6
Government Administration	8,330	8,370	8,220	-0.5	1.3
Government Tribes	940	970	930	-3.1	1.1

* Preliminary estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

log company Coldwater Creek prevented *Retail Trade* from adding jobs. In February 1999, *Retail Trade* employed 10,121 people. Four years later, it employed 10,000 people. *Utilities* and *Transportation* exhibit a similar holding pattern, while *Wholesale Trade* lost 240 jobs in those four years.

The *Information* sector employed 1,260 people in February 2003, only 10 fewer than it employed the year before. The 30 jobs lost in *Telecommunications* were almost offset by the 10 jobs gained in *Publishing* and the 10 jobs gained in software development, cable television, Internet service providers, and radio broadcasting.

Financial Activities includes not only the 1,300 jobs at banks and other financial businesses, but also the 740 jobs at insurance companies, the 580 jobs at real estate companies, and the 220 jobs at rental and leasing businesses. Low mortgage rates generated most of the 130 new jobs at real estate firms, mortgage lenders, and title insurance companies.

Professional and Business Services enjoyed a substantial gain of 210 jobs between February 2002 and February 2003. Throughout the economic downturn of the past two years, this sector has bucked downward trends. *Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services* employed 2,170 people in February 2003—70 more than the year before. Tenants at the University of Idaho Research Park in Post Falls provided the primary source of those new jobs. Other components of *Professional and Business Services*, such as call centers, employment agencies, janitorial services, the management of companies, and waste management services, added 140 jobs.

Educational and Health Services added 360 jobs—more than any other sector. Private educational facilities employed 360 people in February 2003, up 40 people from the year before. *Health Care* continued to grow rapidly to 5,020 by adding 210 jobs. (The Panhandle's five community hospitals are not included in this private-sector *Health Care* total; those 2,260 jobs appear in *Government Administration*.) *Social Services*, which also makes up part of *Educational and Health Services*, includes organizations that assist people with disabilities such as Goodwill and TESH; organizations that help teens such as Rocky Mountain Academy; agencies providing personal care in people's homes; senior centers; child care providers; hospices; hotlines; and food banks. *Social Services* employment increased from 1,280 jobs in February 2002 to 1,390 jobs one year later.

Leisure & Hospitality held its own between February 2002 and February 2003. *Arts, Amusements & Recreation*—made up of arts, musical, theatrical, sports, and historical organizations; museums; Silverwood, Wild Waters, Schweitzer Mountain Resort, Skate Plaza, Silver Mountain Resort, Lookout Pass Ski Area, Greyhounds Park, Triple Play, Stateline Showgirls, and other amusement facilities; bowling alleys; golf courses; marinas; and fitness clubs—employed 1,420 people in February 2000 and 1,370 people one year later. The closures of two Coeur d'Alene amusement facilities, GoKart Family Fun and Adventures n'Fun, caused the job losses. (One of the Panhandle's largest amusement facilities, the Coeur d'Alene Tribal Casino near Worley, is not included in these statistics because tribal employment is included in *Government*.) *Accommodation*—hotels, motels, and other accommodations—employed 1,350 people in February 2003—60 fewer people than the year before. The sector's largest industry group, *Food Service & Drinking Places*, grew from 4,380 jobs in February 2002 to 4,500 jobs a year later. (Restaurants and bars used to be included in *Retail Trade* under the former SIC system.)

Other Services seemed static during the 12-month period. *Repair & Maintenance* grew from 760 jobs to 780 jobs because of the opening of some automotive repair businesses. *Personal & Laundry Services*—including barber shops, hair and nail salons, tanning parlors, photography studios, wedding chapels, funeral homes, laundromats, and drycleaners—held steady at 390 jobs. *Religious, Grant-Writing, Civic, Professional, Labor & Other Organizations* include chambers of commerce, labor unions, property associations, fraternal organizations, humane societies, Early Head Start, Panhandle Area Council, chambers of commerce, scouting organizations, Intermountain Forest Indus-

try Association, and the United Way. They employed 1,000 people in February 2003, 10 fewer people than the year before.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Benewah County

- Bill and Kim Aiton opened Aiton's Family Furniture in March at the former Paddlewheel Pizza building on Main Avenue in St. Maries. The new store sells furniture, clocks, and home decorations.
- Debby and Keith Powell recently opened Pace Fitness for Women, a fitness center offering circuit training, at 521 Main Avenue in St. Maries.

Bonner County

- The Bonner County Economic Development Corporation recently announced that Mac's Custom Tie-Downs will move to the Sandpoint area from Chehalis, Washington, this summer. The business that manufactures tie-downs for transporting boats, bicycles, specialty cars, and equipment will employ six to eight people when it moves to Sagle. Mac's business is predominantly mail order. It's making the move because it's impressed by the high quality of life and business-friendly environment in the area.
- The economic slowdown and the decline in Canadian visitors are taking a toll on the Sandpoint area's retail sector. The Kmart store in Ponderay permanently closed its doors on March 13, putting 70 people out of work. After 15 years in business, Susan and Harold Smith closed the Incredible Christmas Store in Ponderay following the closure of their store near Cedar Street Bridge in downtown Sandpoint last year. The two closures put five people out of work. At one time, a dozen people worked for the two stores.

Kootenai County

- Coeur d'Alene recently welcomed these new businesses—Cheers Sports Bar & Deli, offering live bands, deejays, karaoke, pool tables, video games, and sports on television in the former Beaudry Motorsports building in Midtown on Fourth Street; Angelheart Pet Salon at 104 Spruce Avenue; Papa's Barber Shop, a classic barber shop at 6064 North Government Way; Connoisseur's Café in the former Rustler's Roost building at 819 Sherman Avenue; Somewhere in Time Second-Hand Store & Hair Salon at 108 East Poplar Avenue; Coeur d'Alene Eye Care Clinic at 409 West Neider Avenue; Anthony's Midtown Bistro in the former Caper's building at 315 East Walnut Avenue; La Cocina Mexican Restaurant at 846 North Fourth Street; and Hometown Pizza in the former Eduardo's Restaurant at 300 Lake Coeur d'Alene Drive.

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